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Appln. No. 10/8628,985

Filing Date: July 28, 2003

Applicant: Harold Taylor

Title: Tracking Hitch Assembly Utilizing Tractor Lift Arms as Stabilizers

Enclosures: First Response
Six sheets replacement drawings

Docket No.: 43071-287794

Atty/Sec'y: LAR:amd

Date Mailed: September 8, 2004

EXHIBIT C

FEB 16 2005

PATENTS

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICEIn re Application of:
HAROLD TAYLOR

Serial No. 10/628,985

Filed: JULY 28, 2003

For: TRACKING HITCH ASSEMBLY
UTILIZING TRACTOR LIFT ARMS
AS STABILIZERS

Examiner: Torres, Alicia M.

Art Unit: 3671

FIRST RESPONSE

Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Sir:

Responsive to the Office Action dated June 25, 2004 in the application identified above, please amend the application as follows:

Amendments to the Specification begin on page 3 of this paper.

Amendments to the Claims are reflected in the listing of claims which begins on page 9 of this paper.

Amendments to the Drawings begin on page 15 of this paper and include six attached replacement sheets.

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as First Class mail in an envelope addressed to: Commissioner of Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on September 8, 2004.


Larry A. Roberts-Reg. No. 31,871

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Remarks/Arguments begin on page 16 of this paper.

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AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend the specification as follows:

Please delete the section entitled "BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS" and replace it with the following new section entitled "BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS":

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a side view of the hitch in a hitch assembly according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

Fig 2 is ~~an exploded side view of the hitch shown in Fig. 1, with the stabilizer rotated 90 degrees for illustrative purposes~~ a top view of the hitch shown in FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 is ~~a top view of the hitch shown in FIG. 1~~ an exploded side view of the hitch shown in Fig. 1, with the stabilizer rotated 90 degrees for illustrative purposes.

FIG. 4 is a side view of a hitch pivot in the hitch assembly of the preferred embodiment.

FIG. 5 is a top view of the hitch pivot of FIG 4.

FIG. 6 is a side view showing the hitch of FIGS. 1-3 coupled to the hitch pivot of FIGS. 4 and 5.

FIG. 7 is a top view of the coupled hitch and hitch pivot of FIG. 6.

FIG. 8 is a top view showing the hitch assembly of the present invention about to be hitched to a tractor.

FIG. 9 shows the hitch assembly of FIG 8 coupled to the drawbar of the tractor.

FIG. 10 shows the lift arms of the tractor pivoted outward and an adjustable hitch stabilizer of the hitch assembly sliding forward into a position to engage the lift arms.

FIG. 11 shows the hitch stabilizer of the hitch assembly coupled to the lift arms of the tractor.

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FIG. 12 is a perspective view of a tractor hitched to a towed implement using the hitch assembly of the present invention.

FIG. 13 is a perspective view of the tractor, implement, and hitch assembly of FIG. 12 with the tractor turned at an angle with respect to the towed implement.

FIG. 14 is another perspective view of the tractor, implement, and hitch assembly of FIG. 12 with the tractor turned at an angle with respect to the towed implement.

Please delete the section entitled "DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DISCLOSED EMBODIMENT" and replace it with the following new section entitled "DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DISCLOSED EMBODIMENT":

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DISCLOSED EMBODIMENT

Referring now to the drawings, in which like numerals indicate like elements throughout the several views, FIGS. 1-5 illustrate a hitch 10 and a hitch pivot 12. As will be seen, the hitch 10 provides a laterally rigid connection to the drawbar and lift arms of an agricultural tractor, while the hitch pivot 12 provides a pivotable connection between the rear of the hitch 10 and a towed implement.

Referring first to FIGS. 1-3, the hitch 10 includes an elongated lower hitch tube 20. A clevis bar 22 is provided at the forward end of the lower hitch tube 20. Slots 23 through both sides of the clevis bar are adapted to receive a hitch pin to couple the forward end of the hitch 10 to the drawbar of a tractor. The slots 23 preferably are elongated on the lengthwise dimension of the clevis bar 22 to prevent subjecting the hitch pin to a shearing force when the tractor tows the towed implement on hilly terrain.

Upright frame members 24 are mounted on either side of the lower hitch tube 20 at a location behind the clevis bar 22 and spaced forward from the rearward end of the lower hitch tube 20. The space between the upright frame members 24 provides a passage for a drive shaft of a towed implement to be connected to the power takeoff of the towing tractor.

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An upper hitch tube 26 has a forward end mounted between the two upright frame members 24 and extends rearward. A cap gusset plate 36 is mounted atop the upper ends of the upright frame members 24 and extends along a forward portion of the upper hitch tube to provide additional mounting support for the upper hitch tube 26. A lock pin 38 projecting upwardly adjacent the rearward edge of the ~~cap gusset plate 36~~ upper hitch tube 26 provides a means for attaching a transport bar 39, discussed below.

Gusset plates may optionally be mounted in the included angle between each upright frame member 24 and the underside of the upper hitch tube 26 if desired for additional support of the upper hitch tube.

The upper hitch tube 26 is disposed in parallel, spaced-apart relation to the rearward portion of the lower hitch tube 20. Coaxial openings 32, 34 are formed adjacent the rearward ends of the upper hitch tube 26 and lower hitch tube 20, respectively. As will be seen, the coaxial openings 32, 34 define the pivot axis 35 of the towed implement with respect to the towing vehicle.

With further reference to FIGS. 1-3, a hitch stabilizer 40 is slidably and rotatably mounted to a stabilizer support sleeve 43 which is fitted to the forward portion of the lower hitch tube 20 between the clevis bar 22 and the upright frame members 24. The hitch stabilizer 40 has a longitudinal axis which extends transverse to the longitudinal axis of the ~~lower hitch tube 20~~ stabilizer support sleeve 43. The hitch stabilizer 40 comprises a central stabilizer tube 42 which is slidably and rotatably mounted to the ~~forward portion of the lower hitch tube 20~~ stabilizer support sleeve 43. Hitch stabilizer wings 44 are connected to and extend laterally from the central stabilizer tube 42. A lift pin 46 extends outwardly from the outer end of each hitch stabilizer wing 44. The lift pins 46 couple the lift arms of a tractor to the stabilizer 40, as discussed below.

Referring now to FIGS. 4 and 5, the hitch pivot 12 comprises a transversely elongated main frame member 50. A pair of upright frame members 54 ~~is~~ are mounted at intermediate locations on the main frame member 50 and extend upward from the main frame member. A stop tube 56 is disposed atop each of the upright frame members 54. The forward edge 57 of each stop tube 56 is angled. When the hitch pivot 12 is attached to the hitch 10, the stop

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tubes 56 limit the range of rotation of the hitch pivot 12 (and hence the towed implement) with respect to the hitch (and hence the towing tractor).

An upper frame member 58 is welded between the ~~upright frame members 54~~ stop tubes 56. Lock pin 52 is mounted to the ~~main frame member 50~~ outside of the left stop tube 56 substantially at a level corresponding to the lock pin 38 on the upper hitch tube to provide a means of attaching a transport bar 39 to the hitch pivot 12 for purposes of transporting the implement by means other than the tractor, e.g., a truck to move the implement from one location to another. A first pivot plate 60 is mounted to the upper edge of the upper frame member 58 and extends forward therefrom. A second pivot plate 61 is mounted to the lower edge of the upper frame member 58 and extends forward therefrom in parallel, spaced-apart relation to the first pivot plate 60. Similarly, a third pivot plate 62 is mounted to the upper edge of the main frame member 50 and extends forward therefrom, while a fourth pivot plate 63 is mounted to the lower edge of the main frame member 50 and extends forward therefrom in parallel, spaced-apart relation to the third pivot plate 62. Coaxial, vertically aligned openings 64 (Fig. 5) are formed in the four pivot plates 60–63. Nuts 66 are welded to the upper surface of the first pivot plate and to the lower surface of the fourth pivot plate in coaxial alignment with the openings 64 to provide a means for securing bolts to the pivot plates.

An attaching plate 70 is mounted to the lower face of the main frame member 50 and extends rearward. A plurality of holes 72 is formed in the attaching plate. The attaching plate 70 is adapted to abut an upper or lower surface of the forward end of a towed implement and is fastened to the towed implement by threaded fasteners inserted through the openings 72 to secure the hitch pivot 12 to the towed implement.

With the hitch pivot mounted to an implement to be towed, the rectangular opening defined by the upright frame members 54, the main frame member 50, and the upper frame member 58 provides a passage through which the drive shaft of the implement can couple to the power takeoff of the tractor.

FIGS. 6 and 7 depict the hitch 10 mounted to the hitch pivot 12 to form a hitch assembly 80. The rearward end of the upper hitch tube 26 of the hitch 10 is received between

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the first and second pivot plates 60, 61 of the hitch pivot 12. The opening 32 in the upper hitch tube 26 (FIG. 6) aligns with the openings 64 in the first and second pivot plates 60, 61 (FIG. 5). A bolt 65 shown in FIG. 3 can be inserted from the bottom, through the aligned openings, and threaded into the nut 66 welded to the upper surface of the first pivot plate. Similarly, the rearward end of the lower hitch tube 20 of the hitch 10 is received between the third and fourth pivot plates 62, 63 of the hitch pivot 12. The opening 34 in the lower hitch tube 20 aligns with the openings 64 in the third and fourth pivot plates 62, 63. A bolt 67 shown in FIG. 3 can be inserted from the top, through the aligned openings, and threaded into the nut 66 welded to the lower surface of the fourth pivot plate.

With the hitch 10 and hitch pivot 12 thus aligned, the pivot point 35 is ~~moved rearward to a location~~ located near the front of the towed implement.

FIGS. 8–11 illustrate the coupling of the hitch assembly 80 to the drawbar 82 and lift arms 84 of a tractor (not shown). In FIG. 8 the hitch assembly 80 is advanced toward the tractor, or the tractor is backed toward the hitch assembly, achieving relative movement between the tractor and the hitch assembly in the direction indicated by the arrow 90. The clevis bar 22 at the forward end of the hitch assembly 80 engages the drawbar 82 of the tractor, as shown in FIG. 9. In FIG. 10 the lift arms 84 of the tractor are pivoted outward, in the direction indicated by the arrows 92. The hitch stabilizer 40 slides forward on the ~~lower hitch tube 20~~ stabilizer support sleeve 43 in the direction indicated by the arrows 94. In FIG. 11, the lift arms 84 pivot back to their normal positions as indicated by the arrows 96, and the lift arms couple to the lift pins 46 on the hitch stabilizer 40.

Referring now to FIGS. 12–14, the hitch assembly 80 is illustrated coupling a towing vehicle, in this case a Ford agricultural tractor 100, to a towed implement, more specifically, a sprayer 102. The hitch 10 is mounted to the drawbar 82 and lift arms 84 of the tractor 100 in the manner explained above with respect to FIGS. 8–11. The hitch pivot 12 is attached to a forward end of the frame of the sprayer 102. A driveshaft 104 driven by the power take-off of the tractor provides power to the sprayer. The driveshaft 104 couples to a ~~universal~~ constant velocity joint 106 at the forward end of the sprayer 102 to permit pivoting movement between the tractor 100 and the sprayer 102. The ~~universal~~ constant velocity joint

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106 is located along the axis defined by the two pivot bolts 65, 67 of the hitch assembly 80. Thus the driveshaft 104 pivots about the same pivot point 35 as the hitch assembly 80, making possible extreme turning angles between the tractor 100 and the sprayer 102 without the hitch assembly interfering with the driveshaft.

The lift arms of the tractor are permitted to "float." When a lateral rotational force is exerted against the hitch assembly, one lift arm is placed in tension, and the other lift arm is placed in compression. The lift arms in conjunction with the drawbar thus stabilize the hitch assembly without the need for any chains or additional braces.

It will be appreciated that the capability of the hitch stabilizer 40 to slide on the ~~lower hitch tube 20~~ stabilizer support sleeve 43 permits the hitch assembly 80 to be used with a variety of towing vehicles that may have lift arms of differing lengths.

Finally, it will be understood that the preferred embodiment has been disclosed by way of example, and that other modifications may occur to those skilled in the art without departing from the scope and spirit of the appended claims.

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LISTING OF CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions or listings of claims in the application.

1. (Original) Apparatus for attaching a towed implement to the drawbar of a tractor having lift arms laterally displaced from the drawbar, comprising:

a hitch for selective coupling to the drawbar of the tractor;

a stabilizer extending laterally from the hitch and having elements for coupling to the lift arms of the tractor whereby the stabilizer prevents the hitch from pivoting with respect to the drawbar when a pivoting force is exerted against the hitch; and

a hitch pivot located behind the stabilizer and associated with the hitch for establishing a pivotable connection between the hitch and a front end of the towed implement, whereby pivoting movement between the tractor and the towed implement occurs at the pivotable connection.

2. (Original) Apparatus as in Claim 1, wherein:

the stabilizer is displaceable along the length of the hitch to accommodate variations in longitudinal spacing between the drawbar and lift arms of the tractor.

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3. (Original) Apparatus as in Claim 1, wherein:

the stabilizer is rotatable in a plane transverse to the length of the hitch to accommodate rolling movement of the tractor relative to the towed implement.

4. (Original) Apparatus as in Claim 1, wherein:

the stabilizer is displaceable along the length of the hitch to accommodate variations in longitudinal displacement between the drawbar and lift arms of the tractor, and is rotatable in a plane transverse to the length of the hitch to accommodate rolling movement of the tractor relative to the towed implement.

5. (Original) Apparatus as in Claim 1, wherein the stabilizer comprises:

a tubular central portion slideably mounted on a forward portion of the hitch;

stabilizer wings extending laterally from the central portion; and

attachment elements associated with the stabilizer wings in distal relation to the central portion for coupling the stabilizer wings to the lift arms of the tractor.

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6. (Original) Apparatus as in Claim 1, wherein the hitch pivot comprises:

a main frame for attachment to the towed implement;

a pair of upright frame members mounted at mutually spaced apart intermediate locations on the main frame and extending upwardly from the main frame;

an upper frame extending between the upright frame members above the main frame;

upper pivot means mounted to the upper frame member;

lower pivot means mounted to the main frame in alignment with the upper pivot means; and

means pivotably connecting the upper and lower pivot means to the hitch to establish the pivotable connection between the hitch and the front end of the towed implement.

7. (Original) Apparatus as in Claim 1, wherein the hitch comprises:

an elongated lower hitch tube a front end of which is adapted for coupling to the drawbar of the tractor, and having a rearward portion;

upright frame members mounted in mutually spaced apart relation on each side of the lower hitch tube;

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an upper hitch tube mounted between the upright frame members and extending rearward in parallel spaced-apart relation to the rearward portion of the lower hitch tube; and
pivot means adjacent rearward ends of the upper hitch and the lower hitch tube, the pivot means defining a pivot axis between the tractor and the towed implement.

8. (Original) Apparatus as in Claim 1, wherein the hitch comprises:

an elongated lower hitch tube a front end of which is adapted for coupling to the drawbar of the tractor, and having a rearward portion;
upright frame members mounted in mutually spaced apart relation on each side of the lower hitch tube;
an upper hitch tube mounted between the upright frame members and extending rearward in parallel spaced-apart relation to the rearward portion of the lower hitch tube; and
pivot elements adjacent rearward ends of the upper hitch tube and the lower hitch tube, the pivot means defining a pivot axis between the tractor and the towed implement;
and wherein the hitch pivot comprises:

a main frame for attachment to the towed implement;

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a pair of upright frame members mounted at mutually spaced apart intermediate locations on the main frame and extending upwardly from the main frame;

an upper frame extending between the upright frame members above the main frame;

upper pivot means mounted to the upper frame member and adapted for pivotable connection with the pivot element on the upper hitch tube; and

lower pivot means mounted to the main frame in alignment with the upper pivot means and adapted for pivotable connection with the pivot element on the lower hitch tube.

9. (Original) Apparatus for attaching a towed implement to the drawbar of a tractor having lift arms laterally displaced from the drawbar, comprising:

a hitch having a proximal end for selective coupling to the drawbar of the tractor and having a distal end for pivoting attachment to the towed implement; and

a stabilizer extending laterally from the hitch between the proximal and distal ends and having elements for coupling to the lift arms of the tractor whereby the stabilizer prevents the hitch from pivoting with

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respect to the drawbar when a pivoting force is exerted against the
hitch.

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AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS

Six (6) sheets of replacement formal drawings are enclosed.

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REMARKS

No claims have been amended, added, or canceled. Applicants request reconsideration of the application as amended and in light of the remarks set forth below.

Summary of Amendments*Amendments to the Specification*

The "Brief Description of the Drawings" has been amended to correct the descriptions of FIGS. 2 and 3, which were reversed in the application as previously amended.

The "Detailed Description of the Disclosed Embodiments" has been amended to correct grammatical errors and to more accurately describe what is shown in the drawing figures. The element "stabilizer support sleeve 43" has been called out for the first time to facilitate in describing the figures. This revision is necessary because two different elements in the drawings were previously labeled "42." This element does not constitute "new matter"; while not specifically called out in the specification as originally filed, it is clearly shown in the drawings as originally filed.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Examiner has rejected Claims 1-5 and 9 as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,119,789 to Taylor in view of U.S. Patent No. 3,093,394 to McCollum. Essentially, it is the Examiner's position that *Taylor* discloses all elements of Claims 1-5 and 9 except for a hitch for selective coupling to the drawbar of the tractor. *McCollum* is cited for the broad principle that hitches for coupling to the drawbar of the tractor are well known. Thus, according to the Examiner, it would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art

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at the time the invention was made to have modified the hitch of *Taylor* by adding a hitch to couple to the drawbar of the tractor, as disclosed in *McCollum*, and thereby construct the invention of Claims 1–5 and 9.

The Examiner's rejection of Claim 1 is respectfully traversed. The present invention presents an approach which is neither taught nor suggested by either *Taylor* or *McCollum*. The premise is that a drawbar hitch, which traditionally pivots at its forward end at the connection to the drawbar of the tractor, is prevented from pivoting at its normal location by means of a stabilizer which is coupled to the lift arms of the tractor. Instead of the implement pivoting with respect to the tractor at the forward end of the drawbar hitch, a hitch pivot located behind the stabilizer establishes a pivotable connection between the hitch and a front end of the towed implement. Thus pivoting movement between the tractor and the towed implement occurs at the pivotable connection, which is not at its traditional location at the tractor drawbar but instead is rearward of the stabilizer and at the forward end of the towed implement.

Neither *Taylor* nor *McCollum* disclose or suggest a drawbar hitch which is pivotably attached to a tractor drawbar and then prevented from pivoting. Further, since a drawbar hitch pivots at its forward end, there is no need to provide a hitch pivot at a rearward location on the drawbar hitch at the front end of the towed implement.

Further, this structure effectively disables a drawbar hitch from one of its primary functions, i.e., providing a pivotable connection between the tractor and the towed implement. It would not be obvious to combine *Taylor* and *McCollum* if the resulting combination rendered the drawbar hitch inoperative for one of its primary functions.

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A drawbar hitch and lift arms are two alternate means for coupling a drawn implement to a tractor. However, combining a drawbar hitch and lift arms into the same hitch assembly is not merely adding "belt and suspenders." Lift arms are coupled to drawn implements by attaching them directly to the implement, not to an intervening drawbar hitch. If one were to combine the teachings of *Taylor* or *McCollum*, the result would be a drawbar hitch attached to the drawn implement, and lift arms attached to the drawn implement. There is no teaching or suggestion in either *Taylor* or *McCollum* to couple lift arms to a drawbar hitch. Thus, even if one were somehow led to attempt to combine the teachings of *Taylor* and *McCollum*, the claimed invention would not result.

In addition, lift arms are not traditionally used for lateral stabilizing and in fact have a degree of lateral "play" in them. It is only when the lift arms are attached to a drawbar hitch that they add lateral stability, as any forces tending to pivot the drawbar hitch will place one lift arm under tension and the other lift arm under compression. There is no teaching or suggestion in either *Taylor* or *McCollum* that coupling lift arms to a drawbar hitch will laterally stabilize the hitch assembly, a function for which the lift arms are not intended. Further, the coupling of the lift arms to the drawbar disables the lift arms for their primary intended purpose, namely, to raise and lower a drawn implement. It is well settled that a combination of prior art references is not obvious when one or more of the references are rendered inoperative for their intended use.

Further, drawbar hitches are not designed to be fixed with respect to the tractor but rather are designed to pivot. However, when the lift arms are attached to the drawbar hitch, the drawbar hitch is no longer able to pivot with respect to the tractor. There is no teaching or

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suggestion in either *Taylor* or *McCollum* that a drawbar hitch should be laterally stabilized so as not to pivot with respect to the tractor. The coupling of the lift arms to the drawbar disables the drawbar hitch for one of its primary intended purposes, namely, to permit the drawbar to pivot with respect to the tractor. The Examiner's rejection of Claim 1 is therefore overreaching and should be withdrawn.

Regarding Claim 2, neither *Taylor* nor *McCollum* suggests a stabilizer displaceable along the length of the hitch to accommodate variations in longitudinal spacing between the drawbar and lift arms of the tractor. Even if one were somehow led to couple lift arms to a drawbar hitch, the only suggestion in *Taylor* or *McCollum* for mounting lift arms to a drawn implement is to mount the lift arms to pins fixed on an object in predetermined position. Because of variances in the length of lift arms from tractor to tractor, a drawbar hitch with fixed pins which fits the lift arms of one tractor would be incompatible with the lift arms of another tractor. By adding a stabilizer displaceable along the length of the hitch to accommodate variations in longitudinal spacing between the drawbar and lift arms of the tractor, this problem is overcome, and the device can be used with a variety of tractors having lift arms of different lengths.

With further regard to Claim 2, as the tractor pulls the sprayer and they go over rises and through dips, the angle of the hitch relative to the drawbar changes. The lift arms are in their float position and freely move up and down to accommodate these changes. However, due to the geometry of the attachment, the distance between the lift arm attachment point (ball and socket) and the drawbar pin location is constantly changing as the sprayer is towed. This is what makes necessary the floating longitudinal displacement feature of the lateral

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stabilizer. Normally, if a person was to adjust the position of the lift pins to accommodate the length of the lift arms, the new position would be fixed after adjustment because it would be accomplished with nuts and bolts to fasten the lift pins in the new position such as is shown on the McCollum patent when his hitch is transformed. However this would not allow for the changes in terrain. Even the examiner assumes in her statement at the top of page 4 that the relative movement would be for different hitch types, not to accommodate the changing geometry. The lateral stabilizer displaceable along the length of the hitch automatically allows for this constant change and therefore is unique in its self-adjusting design.

Since this feature is neither taught nor suggested by either *Taylor* or *McCollum*, the rejection of Claim 2 should be withdrawn.

Claim 3 recites that the stabilizer is rotatable in a plane transverse to the length of the hitch to accommodate rolling movement of the tractor relative to the towed implement. There is no suggestion of this feature in either *Taylor* or *McCollum*, and the rejection of Claim 3 should be withdrawn.

Claim 4 recites the combination of the features of both Claims 2 and 3. For the reasons set forth above with respect to Claims 2 and 3, the rejection of Claim 4 should be withdrawn.

Claim 5 recites specific features of the stabilizer, including a "tubular central portion slidably mounted on a forward portion of the hitch." For the reasons set forth above with respect to Claims 1 and 2, there is no teaching or suggestion in either *Taylor* or *McCollum* of a sliding connecting between lift arms and a drawbar hitch. The rejection of Claim 5 should therefore be withdrawn.

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Claim 9 recites a hitch and a stabilizer extending laterally from the hitch and having elements for coupling to the lift arms of the tractor. As previously set forth with respect to Claim 1, there is no suggestion in either *Taylor* or *McCollum* of coupling lift arms to a drawbar hitch. In the prior art, lift arms are coupled to the drawn implement in a fixed position for carrying the load, or a drawbar hitch is coupled to the drawn implement (though it should be added, not at the same time!), but lift arms are not coupled to a drawbar hitch. For this reason and the other reasons set forth above with respect to Claim 1, the rejection of Claim 9 should be withdrawn.

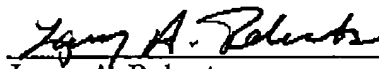
Finally, as relates to all rejected claims, the *McCollum* patent is over forty years old. Despite the existence of drawbar hitches and lift arms for a prolonged period of time, no one has combined a drawbar hitch with a lateral stabilizer to couple to the lift arms of a tractor, despite the benefits to be obtained from applicant's design. The existence of these elements without any previous combination in the manner devised by applicant is evidence of the non-obviousness of the invention.

The foregoing is believed to be fully responsive to the Office Action dated June 25, 2004. For the reasons set forth above, the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance. Reconsideration of the application is requested, and allowance of the claims at an early date is courteously solicited.

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Respectfully submitted:



Larry A. Roberts

Reg. No. 31,871

KILPATRICK STOCKTON LLP

1100 Peachtree Street

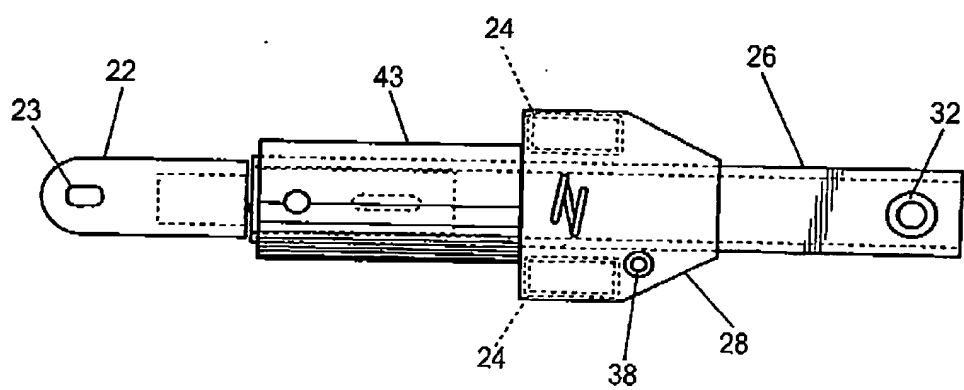
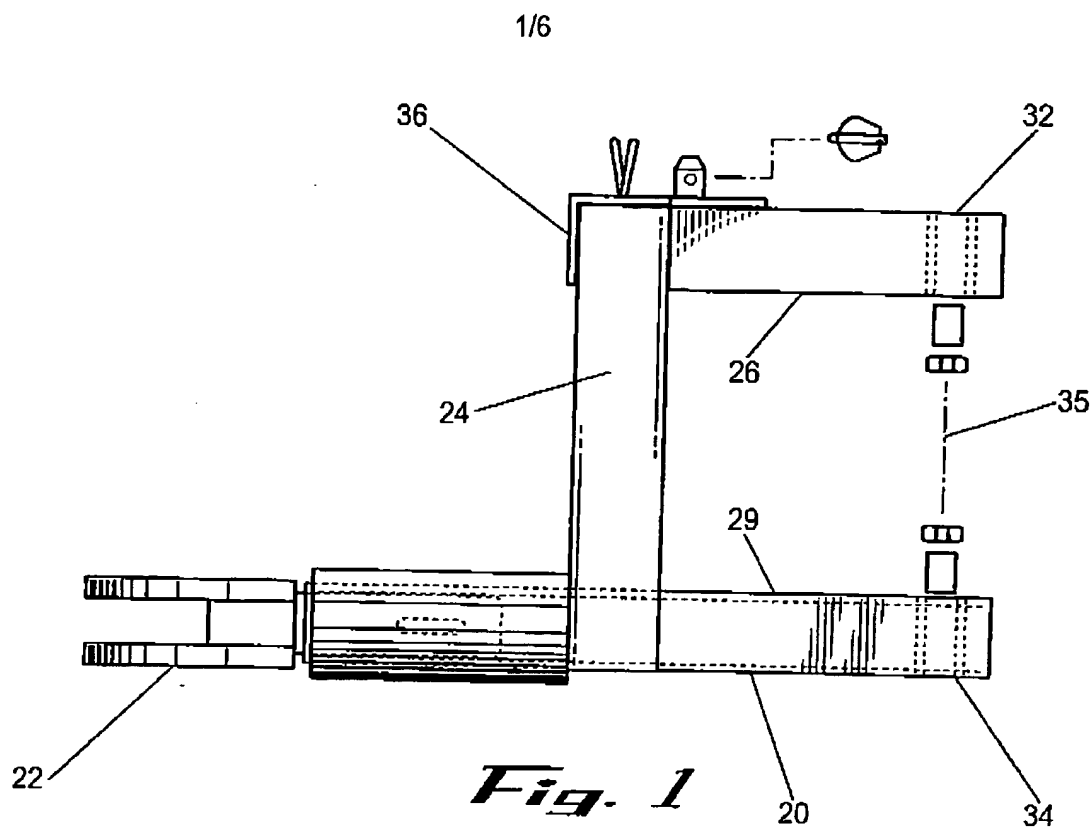
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Atlanta, Georgia 30309-4530

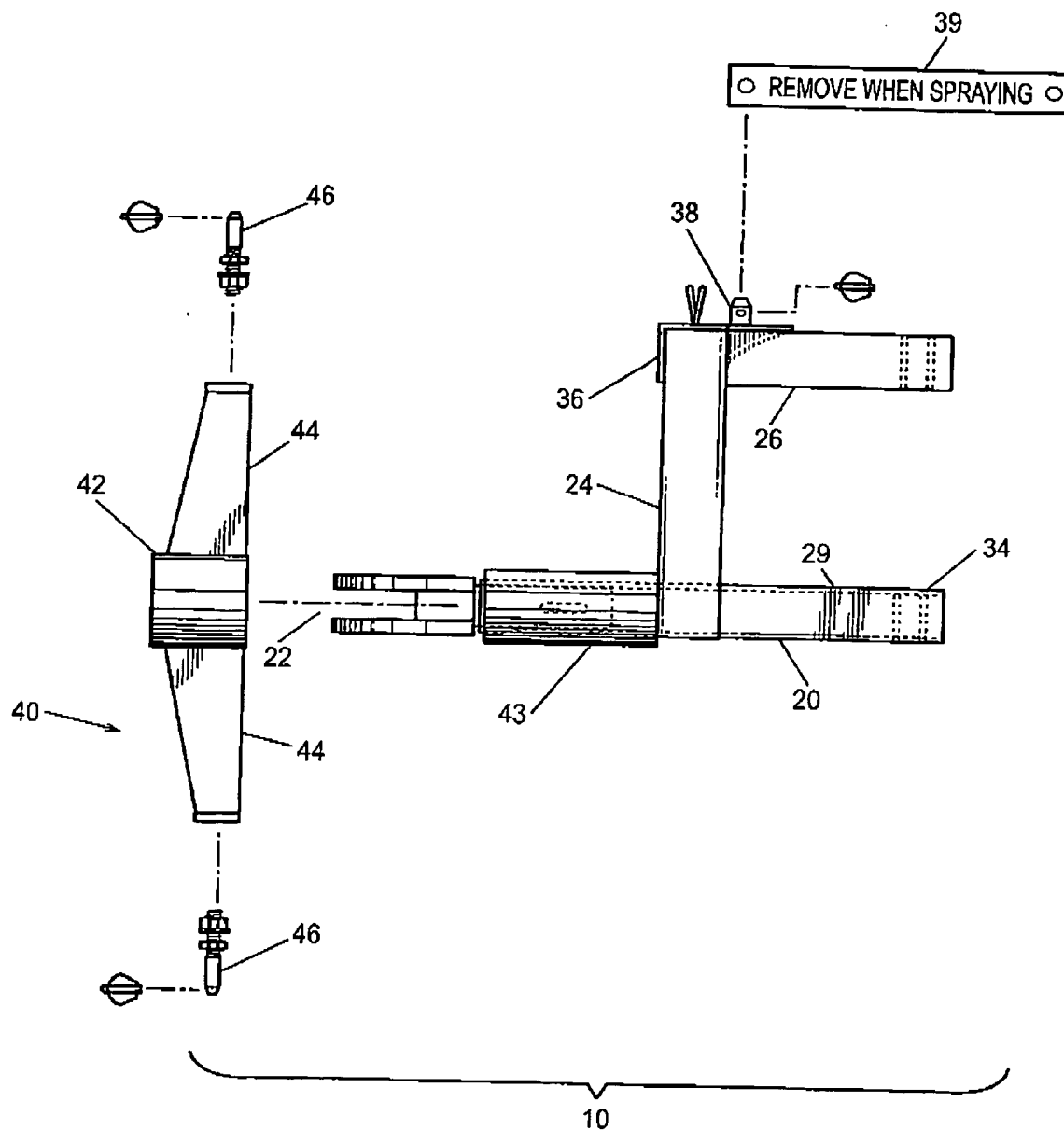
Tel. (404) 745-2409

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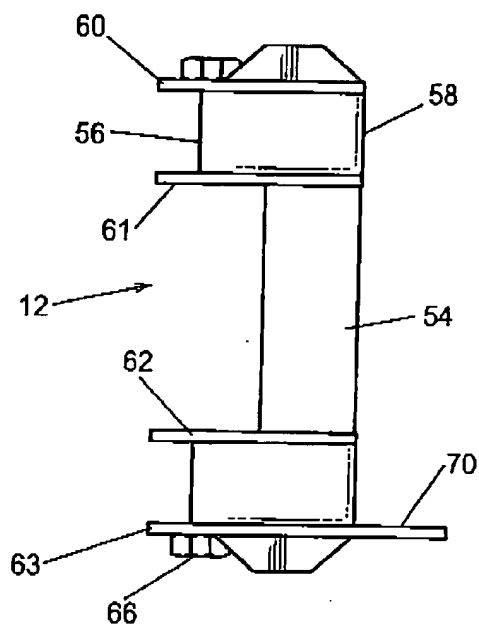
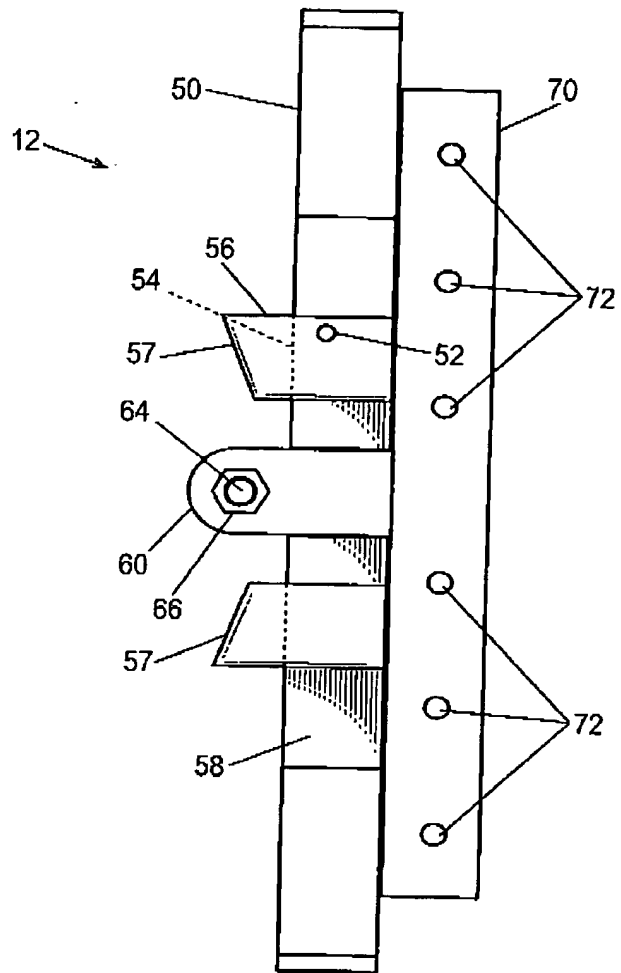
Attorney Docket: 43071-287794



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*Fig. 3*

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*Fig. 4**Fig. 5*

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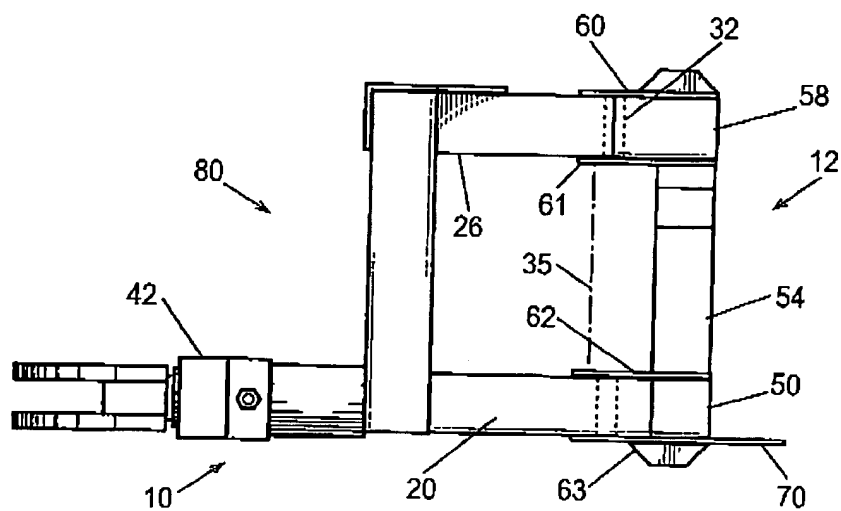


Fig. 6

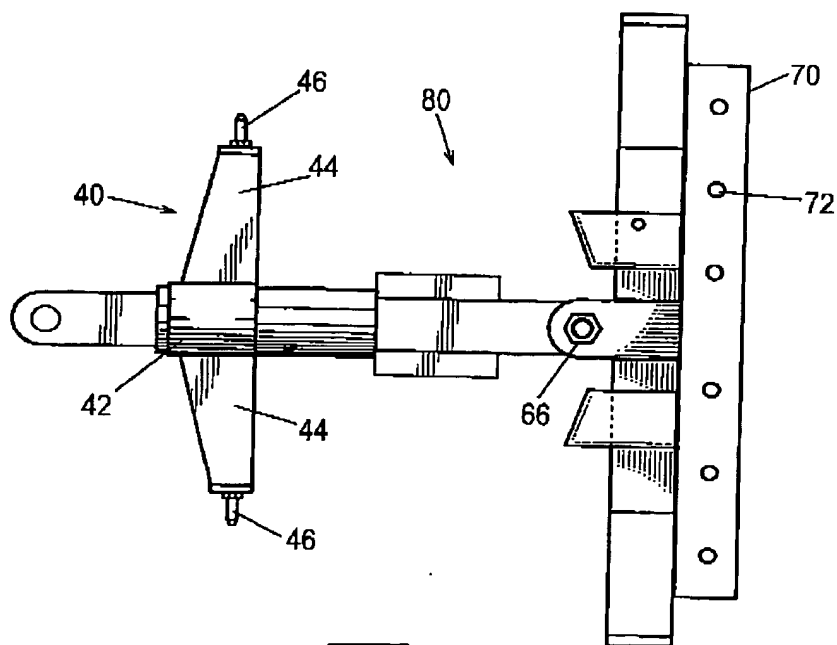
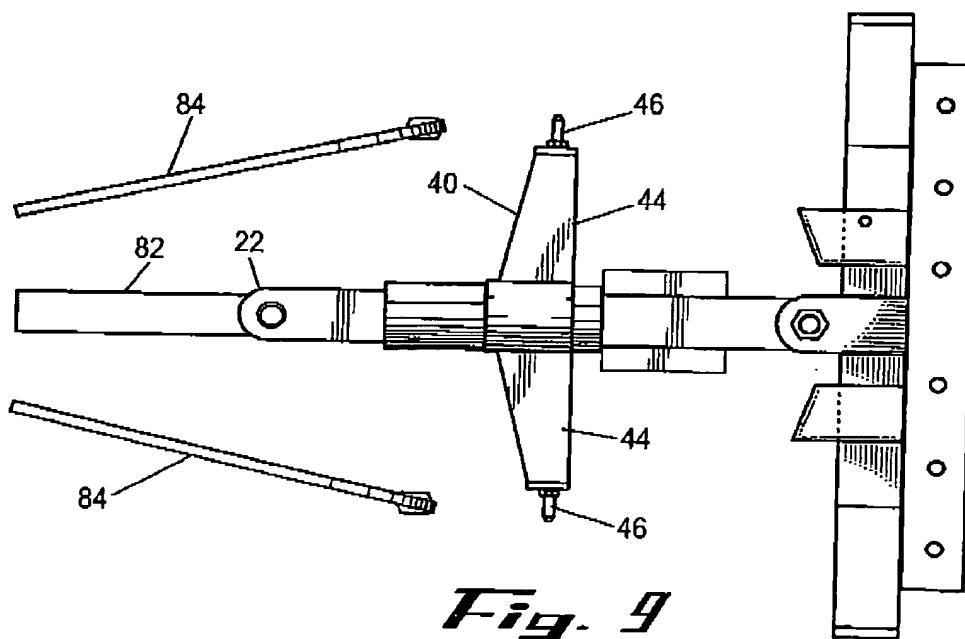
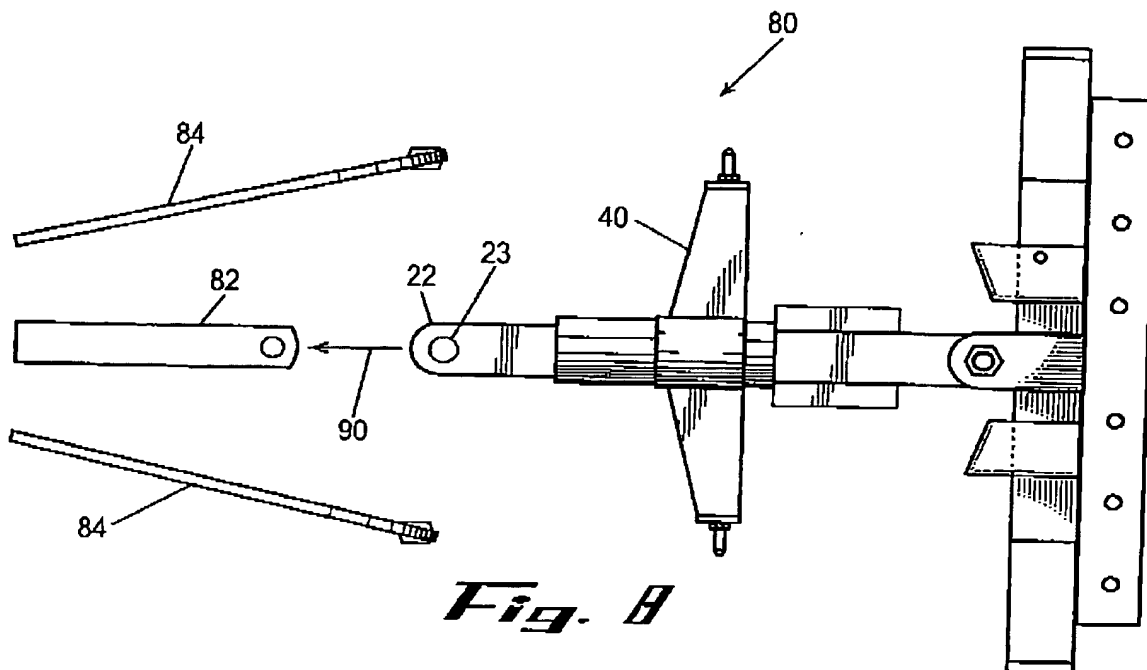


Fig. 1

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